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XI.—*On the Addition to the British Fauna of Pallas's Three-toed Sand-Grouse (Syrrhaptes paradoxus).* By THOMAS JOHN MOORE, Keeper of the Free Public and Derby Museum, Liverpool*.

(Plate IV.)

THE acquisition of a species new to the British Avi-Fauna is always an interesting event. In the present instance that interest is considerably increased by several important considerations. The species named at the head of this paper is not only new to Britain, but also, I believe, to Europe; for, though more than once inserted by Prince Bonaparte in his Lists of European Birds, no instance to warrant its insertion has yet been put on record. The family to which it belongs, being especially adapted to inhabit dry and arid plains, has no representative in Britain, although two species occur on the Continent (*Pterocles alchata* and *Pt. arenarius*). The genus consisted of the single species inhabiting the steppes of Tartary, made known by Pallas three-quarters of a century since, until in 1850 Mr. Gould figured and described a second, obtained by Lord Gifford on the banks of the Tsumureri Lake in the country of Ladakh, under the name of *Syrrhaptes tibetanus*. Of the latter only a single specimen was shot by Lord Gifford; but other examples have since been collected by Captain Speke, and it has also been observed by

* Communicated by Mr. Moore to the late Meeting of the British Association at Aberdeen, and read to Section D.

Dr. Adams. The former is still rare in collections. Its occurrence, therefore, in the living state in this country cannot be regarded otherwise than as an important event in the annals of British Ornithology. It is with great pleasure that, by the permission of the Committee of this Institution, I am enabled to bring under the notice of the British Association a remarkably fine adult male specimen lately shot in Wales.

This bird was received at this Museum on the 12th of July last, '*in the flesh*,' that is to say, recently dead and not yet skinned. It was in excellent feather, and presented only very slight traces of shot-marks about the head. It had evidently been dead a day or two, as the body was beginning to smell and the feathers to become loose: the eyes also were shrivelling up, and were too far gone to determine their colour, except that it was very dark.

It was immediately placed in the hands of Mr. Butterworth, a skilful taxidermist of this town, who succeeded admirably in skinning and stuffing it, although, as I subsequently learned, it had been dead fully three days, during which the weather was excessively hot, and favourable to decomposition.

Dr. Collingwood, Lecturer on Botany at the Liverpool School of Medicine, kindly examined for me the contents of the proventriculus and gizzard. He found therein turnip-seed and unripe seeds of the Furze (*Ulex*) only, and no trace of insect food.

Our Museum is indebted for this valuable donation to Mr. Thomas Chaffers, of Great Howard Street, Liverpool, the bird having been shot by a labourer on a farm held by him on the estate of T. Madoc, Esq., called Portreuddyn Farm, situate near Tremadoc, at the north end of Cardigan Bay, on land reclaimed from the sea.

The account given to Mr. Chaffers by Owen Quin, the labourer alluded to above, and subsequently also to myself, on a visit made by Quin to the Museum, is as follows:—

On Saturday, July 9, he was engaged 'scuffling' turnips in a field at Portreuddyn Farm, called the Trath. This field consists of loamy sand, is close to the river Glasslyn, and one mile from the sea at Portmadoc. About three o'clock in the afternoon he heard at a short distance a cry with which he was not

familiar. On looking attentively in the direction from which it proceeded, he observed three birds running about and pecking among the drills, and making what he described as a "chattering whistling" noise. They were then all three together, and, so far as he could observe, all three alike. Having fortunately, under a hedge near at hand, a gun with which to shoot rooks from an adjoining potato field, he fetched and loaded it. By that time two of the birds had gone some forty yards further off. These he thought he could kill at one shot, but to get near enough must have passed and alarmed the single bird and probably the others. He therefore wisely contented himself with aiming at this, fired, and killed it. Having only a single-barrelled gun, he could not get a shot at the other birds, which flew swiftly away at a height of thirty or forty feet direct eastward across the river into Merionethshire, effectually preventing him from following them. Another man was working in the field at the time, but saw nothing of the birds until the dead one was shown to him. Mr. Chaffers has since made numerous inquiries, but has been unable to hear of any person having observed them either before or after their appearance in his field as related above.

The *Syrnhaptes paradoxus*, as already stated, was first made known by Pallas, who described and figured it under the name of *Tetrao paradoxa**. It agrees with other species of Sand-Grouse in its general form, in its lengthened wings, and in the shortness of its feet; but differs from them in the first primary of each wing terminating in a long filament like the two central tail-feathers of several species of Sand-Grouse. The most essential differences, however, are in the legs and feet. The legs, instead of being feathered only in front, are entirely covered down to the extremity of the toes with short dense feathers; the hind toe is wanting; the toes in front are much expanded, being united together throughout their length, and forming a broad flat foot the sole of which is thickly covered with strong horny papillæ: they are terminated by equally strong broad and flattened nails.

* See Pallas, Itin. ii. App. p. 111, tab. F.; Zoograph. Rosso-Asiat. ii. p. 74.

Linnaeus included the Sand-Grouse known to him along with the true Grouse in his genus *Tetrao*. In 1809 Temminck proposed to separate them, and established the genus *Pterocles* for their reception. In 1811 Illiger proposed to separate from these again the bird discovered by Pallas, in a genus which he named *Syrrhaptes*. Other generic and specific names have since been proposed; but the bird is now generally referred to as *Syrrhaptes paradoxus*.

Unfortunately very little is known of the habits of the *Syrrhaptes*. M. Delanoue, in the 'Dictionnaire Classique d'Histoire Naturelle,' vol. viii. p. 182, describes their walk as slow and laboured; their flight as rapid, direct and elevated, and but little sustained. "The nest is composed of the down of grasses placed among sand and stones under a bush. The eggs are four in number, of a reddish-white colour, spotted with brown. The female quits her nest only at the last extremity. The Khirghiz call these birds *Buldruk*, and the Russians *Sadscha*."

Dr. Edward Eversmann, in the first volume of Cabanis's 'Journal für Ornithologie,' tells us that this *Syrrhaptes* "inhabits only the steppes eastwards of the Caspian Sea as far as the Soongarei. In the west it never passes further to the north than lat. 46°. But eastwards it ranges into higher latitudes, being found also on the high steppes of the Southern Altai Mountains, on the upper course of the Tschuja, in the neighbourhood of the Chinese outposts. The Mongols there call it *Nukturu*; the Dwojedanzes, *Altin*; the Kirghiz Tartars on the Aral Sea, *Buldruk*." Eichwald, in his 'Fauna Caspio-Caucasica,' merely alludes to the presence of this bird on the eastern side of the Caspian Sea.

The only localities which have come under my notice whence the species has been obtained, are the following:—The Kirghiz Steppe, whence Pallas's specimen* and a male and female in the Derby Collection were procured, the Gobi Steppe, and Bucharia.

* Pallas says, "In arenosis deserti Kirgisici circa arenas *Dshidel-mamut*, a Rytschkofio vivæ adlatæ, exuviæ rectricibus carebunt; neque præterea a quopiam nostrorum observata fuit hæc avis curiosissima, quam Kirgisio-tartari pulverisatam contrà insaniam commendant."—Zoograph. ii. p. 75.—ED.

Bonaparte, I believe, is the only author who has included it in the European list. In his 'Geographical and Comparative List of the Birds of Europe and North America,' published in 1838, it is placed as No. 281, and "Eastern Europe" given as its locality. Schlegel, in his 'Revue Critique des Oiseaux d'Europe,' 1844, p. 90, confesses himself ignorant of the reasons which led the Prince to insert it, and therefore excludes it. In another list, 'Conspectus Avium Europæarum,' appended by Bonaparte to his 'Revue Critique de l'Ornithologie Européenne de M. Degland,' 1850, he himself omits it. But in the 'Catalogue des Oiseaux d'Europe,' published by M. Parzudaki in 1856, it again appears, though with a query.

To this last list Prince Bonaparte specially solicited the criticism of M. de Selys-Longchamps of Liége, and of M. de Filippi of Turin,—the former of whom, writing in the name of both, enumerates it with others as being included in error, or without sufficient warrant; and although Bonaparte, in his rejoinder to this critique, insists upon the claims of several of those questioned by M. de Selys, he does *not* defend the cause of the *Syr-rhaptæ**. Its claim to be inserted in the European list can now no longer be questioned; for, in addition to the specimen exhibited, another was killed about the same time in Norfolk for the knowledge of which I am indebted to Mr. P. L. Sclater and Mr. A. Newton, but am possessed of no other information than that it was forwarded to Mr. Leadbeater, of London, for stuffing†. That it was out of the same original flock as the Portreuddyn specimen cannot be doubted; and it will be extremely interesting to compare the dates of their capture. That

* Vide 'Revue et Magasin de Zoologie,' 1857, pp. 56, 117 & 134.

† Of this specimen an account has already been given in 'The Ibis,' vol. i. p. 472. A third specimen, also an adult male, "was shot on the 23rd of July last, near Hobro, in Jutland; and it is stated that another example was observed, but not killed, about the same time, some few miles from the same locality."—*Zoologist*, 1859, p. 6780. This bird is now, as we are informed by Mr. Alfred Newton, in the Museum of the University of Copenhagen. By a letter from Prof. Schlegel, of Leyden, we learn that a pair of this same bird were observed in the Dunes near that city in August and September last, and that one of them was obtained.—ED.

others have fallen on their route from Tartary is of course most probable; it is to be hoped that they may have passed into the hands of ornithologists, and that the facts may be made known.

Liverpool Free Public and Derby Museum,
September 14, 1859.

XII.—*On Birds collected or observed in the Republic of Honduras, with a short Account of a Journey across that country from the Pacific to the Atlantic Ocean**. By GEORGE CAVENDISH TAYLOR, F.R.G.S. Part II.

[Continued from page 24.]

1. HONDURAS MOCKING-BIRD. (*Mimus gracilis*.)

I did not observe Mocking-birds anywhere except on the plain of Comayagua. They were very pugnacious, and drove all other birds away from their vicinity.

2. BLUE BIRD. (*Sialia wilsoni*.)

Blue-birds were common among the pine-trees, on the high ridges, throughout the line of country we traversed.

3. HOODED WARBLER. (*Myiodiocetes mitratus*.)

The only one seen was in an orange-grove adjoining the town of Comayagua.

4. PAINTED FLY-SNAPPER. (*Setophaga picta*.)

This bird was obtained by Mr. Edwards near Comayagua.

5. DOMINICAN PURPLE MARTIN. (*Progne dominicensis*.)

Swallows were common, especially at Comayagua and in the neighbourhood of churches.

I shot one on the wing, while standing in the Plaza, in front of the Cathedral in Comayagua, to the great astonishment of many of the inhabitants, who had evidently never before seen anything shot while in motion. It measured 7 inches in length and $13\frac{1}{2}$ in extent. Eyes dark; beak, legs, feet, and claws black; chin and throat grey; under surface of body white; whole

* The scientific names used in this list are those adopted in Messrs. Selater and Salvin's article on the Ornithology of Central America, in 'The Ibis,' 1859.

